

VZCZCXRO5097  
RR RUEHLA  
DE RUEHMD #1306/01 3471725  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 121725Z DEC 08  
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5764  
INFO RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA 3705  
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 001306

SIPDIS

PASS TO S/CT'S RHONDA SHORE, TO RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON  
DC AND TO EUR/WE'S ELAINE SAMSON AND STACIE ZARDECKI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [SP](#) [ASEC](#) [EFIN](#) [KCRM](#) [KHLS](#) [AEMR](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN: 2008 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 120019

[1](#)1. (U) As requested in REFTEL A, Post's submission for the  
"2008 Country Report on Terrorism" follows in paragraph 2.  
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[1](#)2. (U)

The Government of Spain and its citizens were concerned that  
their country has been and remained a principal target of  
Islamic extremism as well as domestic terrorism. On the  
international front, al-Qa'ida deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri and  
the leaders of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)  
routinely called for the recapture of the former  
Muslim-controlled region in the Iberian Peninsula they still  
call "al-Andalus." As the fifth anniversary of the March 11,  
2004 Madrid train bombings approaches, the Spanish government  
remained in a constant state of heightened alert and took  
pride in the fact that there have been further deaths in  
Spain at the hands of jihadists since 2004. Spain cooperated  
closely with the United States to investigate and prosecute  
acts of terrorism and to prevent future attacks, and worked  
hard to disrupt terrorist acts that possibly were directed  
against U.S. interests.

Spain remained an important transit and logistical base for  
terrorist organizations operating in Western Europe. Its  
geographical location, large population of immigrants from  
North Africa, and the ease of travel to other countries in  
Europe, made Spain a strategic crossroads for international  
terrorist groups. The Spanish government feared that  
experienced terrorists may make their way back to Spain in a  
reverse terrorist pipeline; however, as of December 2008, the  
number of returnees was unknown.

Spain continued to aggressively target terrorist recruiters  
and facilitators. As of late October, 65 suspected Islamist  
terrorists had been detained, according to the Ministry of  
Interior. Many of these individuals were believed to be  
supporters of terrorist groups such as AQ, AQIM, and the  
Moroccan Islamic Combat Group (GICM).

The Spanish government began 2008 with the January 19 arrest  
of 14 suspected radical Islamists - primarily Pakistanis - in  
Barcelona who allegedly were plotting to attack the city's  
transportation system. The Tehrik e Taliban Pakistan  
terrorist group, which has links to al Qa'ida, claimed that  
those arrested were part of its organization and that the  
attacks had been planned to retaliate against the Spanish  
military presence in Afghanistan. In June, Spanish police  
arrested eight Algerian nationals on charges of suspicious  
activities with links to jihadist cells, including recruiting  
and indoctrination, as well as providing financial and  
logistical support to Islamic terrorist organizations. In  
October, security services arrested a dozen radical Islamist  
suspects, all Moroccan nationals, accused of financing

terrorism and of sending recruits to Iraq. Some members of the cell were also accused of helping some of the suspects in the Madrid train bombings flee the country. All were subsequently set free, except for four individuals already in prison on other charges.

The domestic terrorist group Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), whose aim is to create an independent Basque state, waged its deadliest year yet against the Zapatero administration, in office since 2004. ETA's attacks throughout the year claimed four lives and wounded dozens of others. On March 7, on the eve of Spain's national election, ETA gunmen murdered a former town councilman in Mondragon. On May 14, an ETA truckbomb detonated at a barracks in Legutiano killed a Civil Guard. On September 22, a carbomb detonated at a military academy in Santona, killing a corporal in the Spanish army. The fourth victim, a Basque businessman, was shot by ETA gunmen on December 3. Nevertheless, Spain's intensified cooperation with the French government put considerable pressure on ETA. Joint operations in France resulted in - among other successes - the detention of ETA's alleged political leader in May and its alleged military chief, who reportedly was also the number-one authority in ETA, in November. A joint operation on December 9 resulted in the arrest of the alleged replacement military chief. All three arrests occurred in France with the participation of Spanish security forces. As of mid December, security services had arrested 158 alleged ETA members or associates, including 33 in France.

In the judicial arena, the Spanish Supreme Court in 2008 overturned the convictions of several radical Islamists from two previous, high-profile cases. In July the Spanish Supreme Court announced the acquittal on appeal of four of the 21 convicted defendants in the Madrid train bombings trial who had been sentenced in October 2007. The four had been sentenced to between 5 and 12 years for smuggling explosives and membership in a terrorist organization. The Supreme Court also upheld the lower court's acquittal of the suspected mastermind of the attacks, agreeing with the lower court's decision that he be acquitted of belonging to a terrorist organization because he had already been sentenced in Italy and could not be tried for the same crime twice. In October, the Supreme Court overturned 14 of the 20 convictions of a cell sentenced in February 2008 for plotting to truckbomb the National Court. The Supreme Court also reduced the sentences of another four of those convicted in the plot.

Spain participated in the Megaports and Container Security Initiatives, and worked hard to deny terrorists access to Spanish financial institutions. Spain maintained a robust law enforcement and intelligence posture against terrorist finance. Spain was a member of the G8's Counterterrorism Action Group and provided technical assistance to other countries to help build their institutions to counter terrorist finance. Spain is a longtime member of the intergovernmental Financial Action Task Force and its efforts to combat money laundering are considered comprehensive and effective, although Spain has not designated Imad Eddin Barakat Yarkas, the leader of the Madrid-based al-Qa'ida-affiliated cell detained shortly after 9/11. Throughout 2008, Spain had a very active role in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism. Spain hosted a table-top exercise in May, a plenary meeting in June, and a field training exercise in October. This series of events developed Spain's own expertise in disaster preparedness and contingency planning and served to build the capacity of fellow Global Initiative partner nations.

Spain also signed numerous multilateral agreements to strengthen counterterrorism cooperation on a political level. For example, in May, the Ministers of Interior from Spain, France, Portugal, Italy, Malta, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia, agreed to strengthen their exchange of information to prevent anybody accused of a terrorist crime from finding shelter in those countries.

On a bilateral level, Spain signed agreements with Morocco and Algeria. Spanish and Moroccan General Prosecutors Offices in June signed an International Protocol of Cooperation to fight terrorism and organized crime. Also in June, Spain and Algeria signed a bilateral Agreement on Security to Fight Terrorism, Illegal Immigration, and Organized Crime, which includes the exchange of information. Spain contributed more than 750 troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.

AGUIRRE